

FOR A WOMAN HIRED IN WITH ME

Sitting through orientation,
you talked of your husband
with already five years in a Ford's.

You knew I went to college
because my hands and nails were clean.
"What's wrong with that?"
"Nothing," you said with a grin.

Today, lying in bed after work,
I do not have to look.
It's what I can feel without looking --
the dirt that I am too tired to scrub away.
Maybe some will rub off on my sheets.

PARKING LOT IN JULY

It's so damn hot
we get to park in the second row
of the parking lot.
Ain't nobody here.
All home drinking beer.

My brother and I
walk across the steaming blacktop.
Hot enough to fry.
Kick empty beer cans.
Talk about factory tans.

By the fence
a few men smoke cigarettes.
Talk nonsense.
They won't go in.
Drink straight gin.

One man looks at us
shakes his head, "You boys crazy."
Too hot to cuss.
Thermos and lunch pail.
Food already stale.

We keep walking, smile,
probationary employees, resigned to work.
Avoid the temperature dial.
Guard nods as we pass.
We nod back, show our class.